

Remarks

The above Amendments and these Remarks are in reply to the Office Action mailed December 8, 2003. Claims 1-33 were pending in the Application prior to the outstanding Office Action, with claims 20-25 withdrawn from consideration. In the Office Action, the Examiner allowed claims 11-17, 28-29 and 33, rejected claims 1-6, 8-10, 18, 26, 30 and 32, and objected to claims 7, 19, 27 and 31 solely as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. The present Response cancels claims 1-6, 8-10, 18, 26, 30 and 32 and amends claims 7, 19, 27 and 31, leaving for the Examiner's present consideration claims 7, 11-17, 19, 27-29, 31 and 33. Reconsideration of the objected-to claims in light of these amendments is requested.

I. REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102(B) OVER *WELCH, ET AL.* (U.S. PAT. NO. 5,894,978)

Claims 1, 2, 18, 30 and 32

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 18, 30 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Welch*. In the interest of furthering prosecution, the Applicants request cancellation of claims 1, 2, 18, 30 and 32, with the intent to pursue the claimed matter contained therein in a continuation application.

II. REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(A) OVER *WELCH* IN VIEW OF *HELMUS, JR.* (U.S. PAT. NO. 3,524,373)

Claims 3

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 18, 30 and 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Welch* in view of *Helmus*. In the interest of furthering prosecution, the Applicants

request cancellation of claim 3, with the intent to pursue the claimed matter contained therein in a continuation application.

III. REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102(B) OVER *WELCH* OR, IN THE ALTERNATIVE UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(A) OVER *WELCH*

Claim 4

The Examiner rejected claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by *Welch* or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over *Welch*. In the interest of furthering prosecution, the Applicants request cancellation of claim 4, with the intent to pursue such claimed matter contained therein in a continuation application.

IV. REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(A) OVER *WELCH* IN VIEW OF *STAATS, ET AL.* (U.S. PAT. NO. 3,496,817)

Claims 5, 6, 8, 9 and 26

The Examiner rejected claims 5, 6, 8, 9 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Welch* in view of *Staats*. In the interest of furthering prosecution, the Applicants request cancellation of claim 5, 6, 8, 9 and 26, with the intent to pursue the claimed matter contained therein in a continuation application.

V. REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(A) OVER *WELCH* IN VIEW OF *STAATS* AND FURTHER IN VIEW OF *HELMUS*

Claim 10

The Examiner rejected claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Welch* in view of *Staats*, further in view of *Helmus*. In the interest of furthering prosecution, the Applicants request cancellation of claim 5, 6, 8, 9 and 26, with the intent to pursue the claimed matter contained therein in a continuation application.

VI. ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Claims 7, 11-17, 19, 27-29, 31 and 33

The Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 11-17, 28, 29 and 33 are in condition for allowance.

Claims 7, 19, 27 and 31 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicants have amended claims 7, 19, 27 and 31 to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, the Applicants request that claims 7, 19, 27 and 31 be allowed.

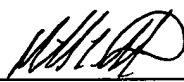
VII. CONCLUSION

In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims now pending in the subject patent application should be allowable, and a Notice of Allowance is requested. The Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned before an advisory action is issued in order to avoid any unnecessary filing of an appeal.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 06-1325 for any matter in connection with this response, including any fee for extension of time, which may be required.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 3/8/04

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